United Nations S/2017/794

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 September 2017

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the forty-third submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015) and paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to United Nations agencies and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as from other Syrian and open sources. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 August 2017.

II. Major developments

Box 1
Key points in August 2017

1. Although the impact of violence continued to affect civilians across the Syrian Arab Republic, the trend of ceasefire agreements and the operationalization of de-escalation areas contributed to a notable reduction in civilian casualties in areas where agreements were put into effect. At the same time, ongoing clashes, in particular military operations targeting strongholds of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continued to result in the injury, death and displacement of the civilian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure.

2. An estimated 15,000 civilians remained trapped in Raqqah city, facing serious concerns with regard to their protection, including the risk of being killed by air strikes, mortar or artillery shelling, snipers or mines, or being used as human shields by ISIL. Conditions for civilians trapped in the city continued to deteriorate. The total number of persons displaced internally owing to fighting since November 2016 in Raqqah governorate has risen to 289,901.

17-16285 (E) 220917

Please recycle

3. Air strikes and clashes intensified, with hundreds of families displaced as pro-Government forces, in coordination with Russian forces, accelerated their advance towards Dayr al-Zawr city. At the same time, the United States Department of Defense publicly confirmed that 106 strikes had been conducted in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate in August.

4. Moreover, by the second half of the month, Government forces and their allies had fully encircled most of the ISIL-held areas of eastern rural Hama, in the Uqayribat subdistrict, where thousands of people, mainly civilians, are believed to remain, with little access to medical care, food or safe drinking water.

5. Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that, as at the end of August, some 3.47 million people were living in both hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic, a decline from the previous 4.44 million, as a result of increased access in the north-east of the country. That number includes 513,420 people living in 11 besieged locations (a decrease from the previous total of 540,000) across the country. Barzah al-Balad, in Rif Dimashq, has been formally removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations, while one other location, Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq, has been added.

3. Although the impact of violence continues to affect civilians across the Syrian Arab Republic, the trend of ceasefire agreements and the operationalization of de-escalation areas have contributed to a notable reduction in civilian casualties in the areas where agreements have been put into effect. That includes the implementation of the de-escalation agreement of 10 July 2017 reached between Jordan, the Russian Federation and the United States of America regarding the south-western part of the country; the announcement of 4 August 2017 by the Russian Federation regarding de-escalation in the northern countryside around Homs; and the agreement of 24 August 2017 among non-State armed opposition groups in eastern Ghutah following de-escalation agreements reached with the main parties. In addition, there was a continuation of efforts to operationalize a memorandum on de-escalation agreed upon in Astana on 4 May 2017 by the guarantors, namely Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey.

4. At the same time, ongoing clashes, in particular military operations targeting ISIL strongholds in the eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, continued to result in the death and displacement of the civilian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. In addition to anti-ISIL operations in the north-eastern area, fighting and clashes, including air strikes and/or artillery shelling and sniper attacks, were reported between Government and pro-Government forces and non-State armed opposition groups in the Governorates of Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah, Homs and Hama. Clashes between the Syrian Democratic Forces and non-State armed opposition groups were also reported in Aleppo Governorate.

5. In Raqqah city, the advance of the Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the international counter-ISIL coalition and led by the Kurdish People's Protection Units towards the centre of Raqqah city, had a continuing impact on the civilian population. The Syrian Democratic Forces control approximately 60 per cent of the city, while, according to reports, civilians now reside in only 5 of the 24 neighbourhoods of the city. An estimated 15,000 civilians remain trapped in the city, facing a number of serious protection concerns, and at risk of being killed by air strikes, mortar and artillery shelling, snipers, mines or being used as human shields. Conditions for civilians trapped in the city have continued to deteriorate further owing to a severe shortage of food, water, electricity and medicine as well as the high price of the limited goods available.

6. Military operations in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate had a continuing impact on civilians. Air strikes and clashes intensified, with hundreds of families displaced in recent weeks as pro-Government forces, in coordination with Russian forces, accelerated their advance towards Dayr al-Zawr city. The United States Department of Defense publicly confirmed that, in August, the United States-led international counter-ISIL coalition conducted 106 strikes on Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, in and around Dayr al-Zawr city and Albu Kamal. ISIL reportedly established mobile checkpoints in the surrounding countryside to prevent people from fleeing. Numerous risks, such as harassment, arrest, landmines, snipers and forced conscription, were reported when civilians attempted to leave ISIL-controlled areas.

7. The humanitarian situation in the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic beyond Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr cities remained grave as displacement of civilians increased. The total number of internally displaced persons tracked since the onset of the Raqqah offensive, in November 2016, many of them displaced multiple times, reached 289,901, with many of them displaced multiple times in the Governorate. The total number of displaced people from Dayr al-Zawr in the month of August reached 2,234. Although reports of some improvements in freedom of movement were received, many displaced persons remain in the camps managed by Kurdish authorities in Raqqah and Hasakah governorates, unless sponsorship by family members could be provided or they suffered from a critical health condition. While the situation improved in many areas, deaths in the camps continued to be reported owing to harsh conditions, including poor water quality and poor access to health care. The recruitment of youth and children, as well as cases of child labour and early marriages in exchange for financial resources, were also reported. Overall, the situation for internally displaced persons remained challenging, requiring the continuous presence and attention of protection partners.

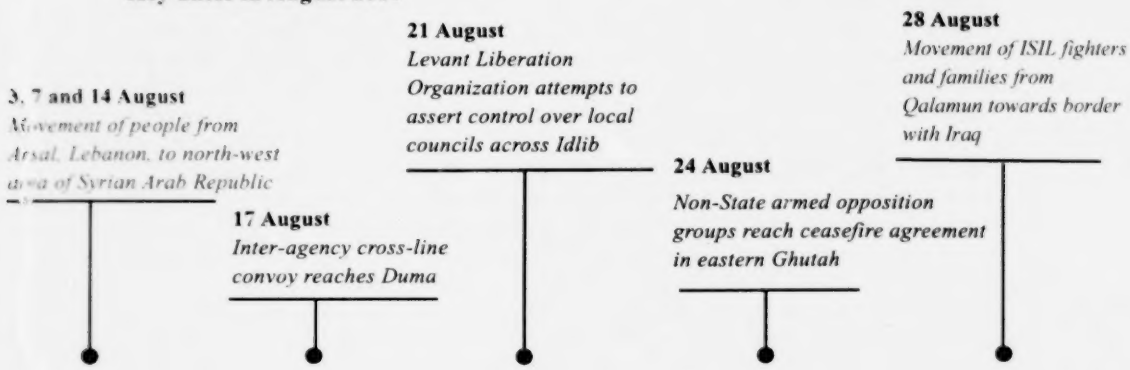
8. The United Nations and its partners have responded to the needs of those displaced by the fighting in the north-eastern area of the Syrian Arab Republic. For example, throughout August, an estimated 333,861 people across the Governorates of Raqqah, Aleppo, Hasakah and Dayr al-Zawr affected by the ongoing displacement received food assistance. Protection actors in the north-eastern area continued to scale up their response by expanding the presence of protection teams for consultations, analysis and the identification of needs (including through mobile activities in newly accessible areas), and the establishment and strengthening of existing static facilities, such as community centres, satellite centres, child-friendly spaces and safe spaces for women and girls. The establishment of trauma stabilization points close to the front line, supported by ambulance services, improved the chances of survival for those critically wounded during fighting. Furthermore, the trucking of water, the construction of communal kitchens and other infrastructure, and the provision of educational materials continued to be provided at camps throughout the north-eastern area of the country.

9. The offensive by Government forces and their allies on ISIL-held areas in eastern Hama intensified in August, with daily reports of air strikes and ground-based strikes, as well as violent clashes. By the second half of the month, Government forces and their allies had fully encircled most of the ISIL-held areas of eastern rural Hama, in the Uqayribat subdistrict, where thousands of people, mainly civilians, are believed to remain, with little access to medical care, food or safe drinking water. Negotiations to evacuate people from the area have reportedly begun, although the United Nations is not involved.

10. Across Idlib Governorate, the Levant Liberation Organization — led by Jabhat Fath al-Sham (former Nusrah Front), which is designated as a terrorist organization by the Security Council — continued its effort to exert dominance over other non-State armed opposition groups and to attempt to legitimize its authority through the

establishment of a civil administration. On 21 August, local councils across Idlib were informed that they would fall under the control of a Levant Liberation Organization-affiliated administration directorate, however many local councils have since issued statements affirming their independence. The Levant Liberation Organization-affiliated Civil Administration for Services has attempted to regulate a number of administrative activities in the area, including a decree on the drilling of boreholes, on 27 August, and the management of bakeries, on 20 August. Ongoing tensions between the Levant Liberation Organization and local councils notwithstanding, no impact on humanitarian access to the area has been reported to date.

Figure I
Key dates in August 2017


3, 7 and 14 August
Movement of people from Arsal, Lebanon, to north-west area of Syrian Arab Republic
17 August
Inter-agency cross-line convoy reaches Duma
21 August
Levant Liberation Organization attempts to assert control over local councils across Idlib
24 August
Non-State armed opposition groups reach ceasefire agreement in eastern Ghutah
28 August
Movement of ISIL fighters and families from Qalamun towards border with Iraq

Box 2
North-western area of the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Humanitarian needs in the north-western area of the Syrian Arab Republic, which includes Idlib and areas of western Aleppo and northern Hama, have increased dramatically in the past two years; there are now an estimated 2.1 million people in need inside the opposition-held areas of the north-western part of the country. As the primary location for evacuations of non-State armed opposition groups following local agreements over the past year, the north-western area of the Syrian Arab Republic now hosts more than 1 million internally displaced persons, which has strained the resources of the local communities and non-governmental organizations that provide them with support. The United Nations, which was not a party to the agreements, has repeatedly expressed its concern that such local agreements did not appear to meet international legal standards or adhere to humanitarian principles. In many cases, such agreements were preceded by the decimation of an area by air strikes.

2. Since the identification of Idlib as one of the four de-escalation areas, on 4 May, civilian casualties have been reduced drastically, with no reports of air strikes in August. However, in-fighting between the two largest groups in the area, Ahrar al-Sham and the Levant Liberation Organization, resulted in violence and shelling that ended only once the Levant Liberation Organization wrested control from Ahrar al-Sham in the majority of areas. The Levant Liberation Organization has begun to dismantle parallel organizations and structures and consolidate judicial, governance and service provision bodies throughout most of Idlib Governorate (see para. 10 above for more details).

3. The United Nations and its partners provide cross-border humanitarian assistance to Idlib from Turkey through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing point. Assistance to the area is twofold, comprising the provision of humanitarian aid and humanitarian services, including in the areas of health, education, and water and waste management.

4. In the three years since July 2014, when cross-border activities began, more than 11,000 trucks carrying humanitarian assistance have crossed into Idlib under the system monitored by the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic (see para. 32 below for more on the role of the Monitoring Mechanism). Food assistance was provided to an average of 545,000 people per month. An average of 324,000 medical treatments were also provided each month by the United Nations. That is only a portion of the larger support provided, however, with up to four times as much assistance provided by Syrian and international non-governmental organizations through cross-border deliveries.

11. Rif Dimashq Governorate experienced a decrease in violence towards the end of the month after the announcement, on 24 August, of an agreement between the two major non-State armed opposition groups operating in eastern Ghutah: Army of Islam and Rahman Corps. During the earlier part of the month, there were unsuccessful attempts to reach an agreement. There was continued fighting and shelling in eastern Ghutah between the two non-State armed opposition groups, as well as continued Government offensives. Shelling and armed clashes in Kafr Batna and Ayn Tarma reportedly resulted in civilian deaths.

12. An agreement was reached at the end of July between the Levant Liberation Organization and Hizbullah, which allowed Levant Liberation Organization fighters and their families to move from the Arsal mountains in Lebanon to the Syrian Arab Republic. The process began on 3 August and continued on 7 and 14 August, during which time more than 5,000 people moved to multiple locations across the north-western area of the country. The United Nations had no part in the negotiation process or the agreement reached, and was not involved in the movement of people. In line with humanitarian principles, however, assistance was provided by humanitarian partners to civilians in need, including the provision of medical treatments to more than 20 people, the setting up of two reception centres and the provision of food, non-food items, water and hygiene kits.

13. On 19 August, Government and pro-Government forces launched an offensive on ISIL positions in western Qalamun in Rif Dimashq. That offensive, in tandem with operations inside Lebanon, led to 670 persons, including a reported 308 ISIL fighters, being evacuated from ISIL-held areas along the Lebanese-Syrian border. Those fighters and their families were to travel to the town of Albu Kamal, in Dayr al-Zawr, on 28 August. However, the international counter-ISIL coalition stated that it shelled the road between Bi'r Humaymah and Albu Kamal to stop the movement of ISIL fighters towards the Syrian Arab Republic-Iraq border. At the end of the reporting period, part of the initial convoy remained stranded in the desert in Homs Governorate.

14. Along the Syrian-Jordanian border, in the area known as the berm, approximately 50,000 people remain in a precarious protection, security and humanitarian situation. Towards the end of the reporting period, with the intensification of military action in the area around the berm, there was an initial movement of people from the smaller settlement of Hadalat, primarily in the direction of Rukban. United Nations agencies have continued to express their concern regarding the safety and security of the civilian population in the settlements around the berm. The last cycle of distribution

of humanitarian assistance was halted on 15 June. The United Nations has urgently sought a resumption of the distribution of aid and the authorization to register the population as a means of further facilitating the delivery of assistance.

Protection

15. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians in significant numbers. As in the past, the high level of civilian casualties remains a strong indication that violations of the prohibition on launching indiscriminate attacks and of the principles of proportionality and precaution are continuing. Children have been particularly affected by the fighting and, in some incidents, have constituted the majority of the casualties.

16. Fighting continued to affect civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in possible violation of international humanitarian law, civilian casualties occurred in various Governorates (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged incidents by many parties to the conflict, including Government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

17. The United States Department of Defense publicly confirmed that in August, the United States-led coalition carried out 1,394 strikes against ISIL targets in the Governorates of Hasakah, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr. Nearly 90 per cent of the strikes (or 1,242 air strikes) were reported to have been in the vicinity of Raqqah city, with the remainder in Dayr al-Zawr and Hasakah Governorates. The number of coalition strikes hitting in and around Raqqah city alone over the month was higher than the number publicly reported by the United States Department of Defense for the entire country in previous months.

18. On 18 August, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation issued a statement saying that Russian Aerospace Defence Forces had supported troops of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in taking control of a number of positions near Husayyah and Sawwanat, in Hama Governorate, and had used unmanned aerial vehicles to detect and eliminate targets.

19. On 21 August, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation publicly stated that Russian Aerospace Forces had continued to provide support to forces of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic fighting in Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs, and Raqqah Governorates. It also announced that it had increased flight intensity to 60 to 70 flights per day, specifying that in the past five days it had conducted 316 flights and 819 strikes, and that during the month it had conducted 990 combat flights and 2,518 strikes against various targets. In another statement issued by the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, on 25 August, the Chief of the Main Operational Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces was quoted as saying that Russian aviation had performed 28,000 combat sorties and some 90,000 strikes throughout its intervention in the Syrian Arab Republic.

20. The Ministry of Defense of the Syrian Arab Republic, on its side, issued regular statements on the launch of multiple strikes in the Governorates of Rif Dimashq, Dayr al-Zawr, Hama and Homs.

21. The United Nations and its health partners received credible reports of 11 attacks that had affected health-care facilities and personnel in August, of which one has been verified and ten are currently being verified. The one verified attack affected a hospital in Ayn al-Bayda village, Idlib Governorate, which was attacked by armed personnel, resulting in the wounding of one administrative staff member and the destruction of an ambulance.

Humanitarian access

Box 3

Key points for humanitarian access

1. Cross-border activities are a vital part of the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) in July 2014, assistance has been delivered to millions of Syrians in various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Hama Governorates from Turkey, and to Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates from Jordan. In August alone, 591 trucks used in 24 convoys by seven United Nations entities delivered much-needed life-saving assistance to more than 1 million people in northern and southern areas of the Syrian Arab Republic. Those operations complemented the critical role played by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and services to millions more people from neighbouring countries.

2. Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that, as at the end of August, some 3.47 million people are living in both hard-to-reach and besieged locations in the Syrian Arab Republic, down from 4.44 million. That number presently includes 513,420 people living in 11 besieged locations across the country (a decrease from the previous total of 540,000). Barzah al-Balad, in Rif Dimashq, has been formally removed from the United Nations list of besieged locations, while Bayt Jinn in Rif Dimashq, has been added to the list. Of the 11 besieged areas during the reporting period, 7 are besieged by the Government (78 per cent of the total besieged population), 1 by both the Government and non-State armed opposition groups (2.5 per cent of the total besieged population), 2 by non-State armed opposition groups (1.5 per cent of the total besieged population) and 1 by ISIL (18 per cent of the total besieged population).

3. In August, humanitarian inter-agency convoys delivered needed assistance to the besieged city of Duma and to Barzah al-Balad, in Rif Dimashq, reaching 55,000 people. Two more inter-agency convoys were dispatched to areas around northern rural Homs and south-east Hama, one to the hard-to-reach towns of Talbisah and Tulul al-Humr, on 19 August, and the second to the hard-to-reach town of Rastan, on 27 August. In total, 191,500 people were provided with multi-sectoral assistance, bringing the total number of people reached in August under the August-September access plan to 246,500, or 20 per cent of the overall number of people to whom access was originally requested under the plan.

4. The removal and delisting of medical supplies from the convoys remained a major challenge, with supplies sufficient for more than 262,201 treatments removed or not allowed to be loaded in August (see table 2), bringing the total number of medical items removed or not allowed to be loaded to more than 600,000 since the beginning of 2017.

22. Following a comprehensive review by the United Nations, it is now estimated that, as at August, some 513,420 people were living in 11 areas under siege (see table 1). One location, namely Barzah al-Balad, in Rif Dimashq, was removed from the previous list of 11 locations. Furthermore, the Bayt Jinn area, in the south-western part of Rif Dimashq, has now been added to the list. People continue to be unable to move freely or to access adequate humanitarian assistance, and are militarily encircled.

23. In addition to the besieged locations, there are also hard-to-reach areas, where some 2.95 million people are estimated to be living. That figure has declined from the previous estimate of 3.9 million as a result of movements and improvements to

access in Aleppo, Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. From within the Syrian Arab Republic, the land route from Aleppo to Qamishly is now accessible and has allowed for the resumption of regular United Nations programming. At the same time, the access of non-governmental organizations from Iraq through the Fish Khabur border crossing point has resulted in increased overall access by non-governmental organizations. As a result, 12 of the 16 subdistricts in Hasakah, 3 of the 10 subdistricts in the northern area of Raqqah and 11 subdistricts in the western part of Aleppo have been removed from the list of hard-to-reach areas.

Table 1
Besieged locations, August 2017

Governorate	*Location*	*Population*	*Besieged by*
Damascus	Yarmuk	12 520	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and non-State armed opposition groups
Dayr al-Zawr	Dayr al-Zawr city (Government-held neighbourhoods)	93 500	ISIL
Idlib	Fu'ah	5 900	Non-State armed opposition groups
Idlib	Kafraya	2 200	Non-State armed opposition groups
Damascus	Qabun	2 500	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq/ Damascus	Irbin and surrounding area (Irbin, Zamalka and Jawbar)	49 300	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Harasta area (Harasta, Mudayra and Misraba)	59 000	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Duma area (Duma, Shaffuniyah and Hawsh al-Dawahirah)	150 100	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Kafr Batna area (Kafr Batna, Saqba, Ayn Tarma, Hammurah, Jisrayn, Aftris, Hazzah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Bayt Siwa and Muhammadiyah)	125 600	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Nashabiyah area (Nashabiyah, Bayt Nayim, Salihiyah, Utaya and Hazrama)	9 300	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Rif Dimashq	Bayt Jinn	3 500	Government of the Syrian Arab Republic
Total		**513 420**	

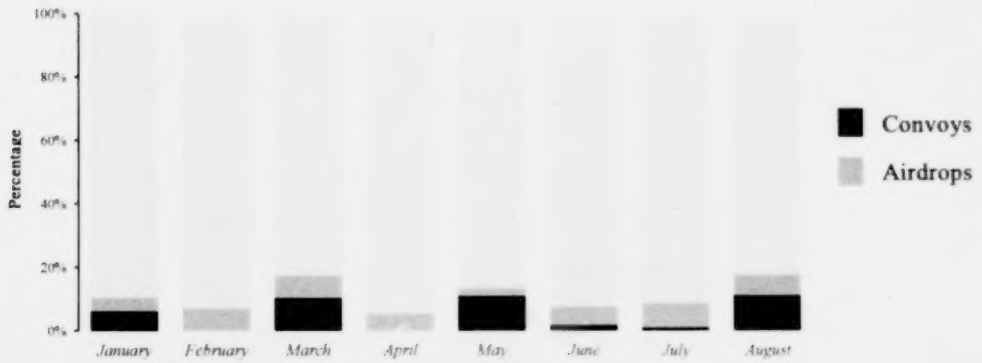
24. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need remained extremely challenging in many areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines, administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict. In particular, access for the United Nations and its partners to those living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remains a critical concern. The United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for August and September requested access to 36 locations, including besieged areas, seeking to reach 1,231,000 people. In August, however, only four inter-agency convoys could be dispatched to besieged and hard-to-reach locations, reaching only 246,500 people in need, or 20 per cent of the overall number of people to whom access was originally requested under the plan (see table 4 for a list of inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys sent in August). That number does

not include convoys carrying supplies delivered by other humanitarian actors. The four inter-agency convoys all went to locations identified for de-escalation but faced a number of security incidents notwithstanding guarantees received by all parties.

25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries during the reporting period to locations across the country. The World Food Programme (WFP) submitted 1,734 official requests to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to targeted locations across the country, all of which have been approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 58 facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, the great majority of which were approved. Moreover, both international and Syrian non-governmental organizations continued to undertake needs assessments and provide support (including medical, educational, psychosocial and protection services) in besieged and hard-to-reach locations, under extremely challenging circumstances and in accordance with humanitarian principles.

Figure II

United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations: percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas, including through airdrops to Dayr al-Zawr city



26. During the reporting cycle, the majority of United Nations agencies and partners continued to be unable to gain access to populations in need in areas of the country controlled by ISIL as all plans to deliver assistance to those areas were suspended as a result of continued security concerns. United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners were prevented from reaching Raqqah city and most of Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, as well as pockets of northern rural Aleppo and north-western rural Hama.

27. Land deliveries to the north-eastern Governorates through the Aleppo-Manbij route proceeded in a regular manner in August. Through those deliveries, the United Nations provided food and nutrition assistance to nearly 400,000 people in Hasakah and Raqqah Governorates and to accessible parts of north-western Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. WFP dispatched food assistance, including nutrition supplies and fortified wheat flour, to nearly 200,000 people in Hasakah Governorate and to more than 183,000 as part of the Raqqah response in Raqqah Governorate and north-western Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. Moreover, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued its response for Raqqah, trucking water to 25,000 people in the internally displaced persons camp in Karamah and providing assistance under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All initiative to more than 53,000 people in Ayn Issa, Karamah, Tabaqah and Twihnia. In total, the humanitarian community

continued to assist displaced people and host communities in at least 49 sites and camps in Hasakah, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr Governorates.

Figure III
United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations by land, August 2017

28. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for more than 262,201 treatments were removed from convoys in August by Syrian authorities. Details regarding the treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 2. Additional medical supplies were scheduled to be delivered as part of the bimonthly inter-agency convoy plan, however only four inter-agency convoys were allowed to proceed in August. Furthermore, since the beginning of 2017, the World Health Organization (WHO) has submitted 10 single-agency requests to the Syrian Government to gain access to 14 locations in six Governorates. The Government has approved five requests: four remain unanswered and one has been rejected.

Table 2
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys in August 2017

Location	*No. of treatments*	*Types of supplies*
Duma	143 000	Atropine, psychotropic medicines and medicines for other common symptoms in palliative care, surgical supply kits and pneumonia kits and medical equipment, including defibrillators, adult ventilators, ultrasound systems, portable X-Ray machines, autoclaves, flame photometers, incubators, intensive care unit beds
Talbisah and Tulul al-Humr	69 485	Latex examination gloves, minor surgery instruments, heparin sodium, salbutamol, electrocardiographs, budesonide inhalation (aerosol), beclomethasone dipropionate, pneumonia kit type A, ketorolac tromethamine, normal saline
Rastan	49 716	Beclomethasone dipropionate nasal spray, carbamazepine, surgical supply kits and pneumonia kits, ketorolac tromethamine, normal saline, glucose 5 per cent

Humanitarian response

29. In August, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all available modalities, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic, in collaboration with the Syrian authorities, and across its borders (see table 3). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. The Government continued to provide basic services both in areas under its control and in many beyond its control. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services, when possible.

Table 3
Number of people reached by the United Nations and other organizations in August 2017

Organization	*No. of people reached*
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	146 103
International Organization for Migration	147 085
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	91 582
United Nations Children's Fund	>3 200 000
United Nations Development Programme	465 338
United Nations Population Fund	431 969
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	438 000
World Food Programme	4 016 395
World Health Organization	780 000

30. During the reporting period, cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan into the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016) (see figure IV

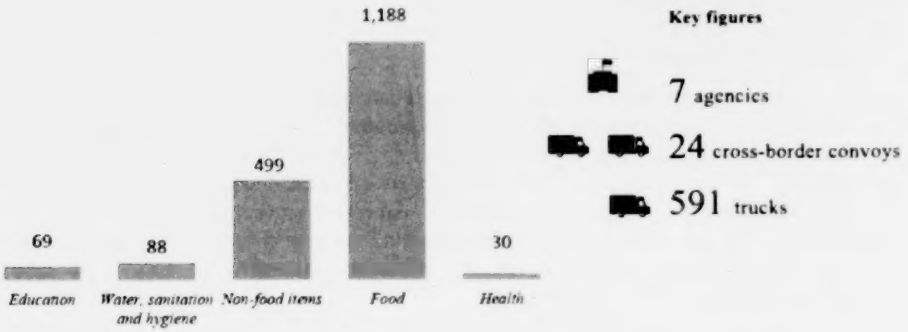
for details). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, destination and number of beneficiaries.

31. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), the United Nations has conducted 600 cross-border convoys with more than 15,000 trucks, delivering health assistance sufficient for nearly 15 million treatments (including vaccinations for more than 2 million people), food for 3.5 million people, many on a monthly basis, non-food items for nearly 4 million people and supplies under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All initiative for 3 million people. Assistance has been delivered to various parts of Aleppo, Idlib, Ladhiqiyah and Hama Governorates from Turkey, and to Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates from Jordan. Those operations complement the critical role played by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide millions more from neighbouring countries with assistance and services.

32. In August, for example, the United Nations delivered food assistance to more than 714,160 people through cross-border deliveries from Turkey and Jordan. The United Nations and its partners also provided 140 health facilities in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Ladhiqiyah Governorates with a total of 351,100 medical treatments through cross-border operations. More than 473,000 people in the southern area of the Syrian Arab Republic benefited from improved access to clean water through the maintenance operations of water and sanitation systems. Of those, 46,000 people received humanitarian and emergency assistance under the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All initiative, including household water treatments, the distribution of hygiene kits, water and latrine installations, improving access to adequate sanitation. In addition, United Nations nutrition partners continued to provide services to more than 4,000 beneficiaries in 19 communities in Dar'a and Qunaytirah Governorates, and more than 65 cases of moderate acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition were treated through the United Nations therapeutic and supplementary nutrition programme. Nearly 3,000 children under 5 years of age received preventive nutrition services (micronutrient powder), and an additional 4,000 children were reached with structured and sustained child protection and psychosocial support services. In total, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations during the reporting cycle, monitoring 591 trucks in 24 convoys by seven United Nations entities in August, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

Figure IV
Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners per cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, August 2017

(Thousands)



33. In August, WFP carried out 22 high-altitude airdrops to the besieged city of Dayr al-Zawr, delivering food rations sufficient for 47,380 people as well as supplies from other humanitarian actors. Since the start of airdrop rotations in April 2016, the United Nations has completed 309 such operations, dispatching more than 6,030 metric tons of food assistance and supplies to those in need in Dayr al-Zawr city.

Table 4
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys in August 2017

Date	*Location*	*Requested target (number of beneficiaries)*	*No. of beneficiaries reached*	*Type of assistance*
17 August	Duma	75 000	35 000	Multisectoral
19 August	Talbisah and Tulul al-Humr	92 500	84 000	Multisectoral
26 August	Barzah al-Balad	40 000	20 000	Food and nutrition
27 August	Rastan	107 500	107 500	Multisectoral

34. During the reporting period, WHO, UNICEF and their implementing partners conducted the first round of a polio immunization campaign in Raqqah Governorate, from 12 to 18 August, targeting 120,000 children under 5 years of age. The campaign concluded with a reach of 86 per cent, and a total of 103,720 children were vaccinated. Moreover, on 28 August, the second polio immunization round for Dayr al-Zawr Governorate concluded, with a total of 255,577 children under 5 years of age vaccinated, representing 78 per cent of the target number. In addition, the United Nations Population Fund and its implementing partners assisted 10,400 people in hard-to-reach locations across the Syrian Arab Republic, providing services relating to reproductive health and gender-based violence.

35. In late July, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) started the third round of its cash assistance programme for 2017, which is planned to be concluded on 14 September. Thus far, some 400,000 Palestine refugees have received cash assistance covering two months' worth of aid. Moreover, on 13 August, UNRWA concluded the second round of food distributions, with more than 360,000 Palestine refugees receiving food parcels.

36. Throughout August, the Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Russian Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

37. A total of 38 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in August. Of those, 18 were approved in August, 1 was denied and 19 remain pending. Of the 28 new visa applications submitted earlier (all in July), 25 were approved in August and 3 were denied. A total of 60 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in August, of which 27 were approved and 33 remain pending (almost all were submitted at the end of August). An additional 16 visa renewals submitted in July were also approved, while none remain pending.

38. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to operate in the country. Two international non-governmental organizations are in the process of completing their registrations. Those organizations continued to face a series of administrative hurdles and restrictions that affected their ability to operate, including in gaining permission to undertake independent needs assessments. The Syrian authorities have, however, initiated dialogue with the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations to streamline and simplify registration and operational procedures for international non-governmental organizations. Moreover, some 217 national non-governmental organizations are authorized by the Syrian Arab Republic to partner with the United Nations.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

39. Since the start of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 21 staff members of the United Nations, 17 of whom were UNRWA staff members, 65 were staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 were staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. In addition, many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are reported to have been killed.

40. A total of 26 United Nations staff members, including 1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 25 UNRWA staff members, are detained or missing.

III. Observations

41. I welcome the persistent and determined efforts to reduce violence through de-escalation agreements, which have delivered observable results in reducing hostilities by all parties to the conflict. I urge all parties to the conflict to continue to take all the steps necessary to reduce violence throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. At the same time, it remains essential to ensure that de-escalation areas are viewed as interim in nature and as a step in assisting in the creation of conditions conducive to inclusive political negotiations guided by Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012. In addition, I strongly underscore the imperative and immediate need for the parties to the conflict, in particular the Syrian Government, to release detainees, abductees and missing persons.

42. Humanitarian access to areas identified for de-escalation, and to many other areas across the Syrian Arab Republic, where needs remain high, still falls far short of what is required. The creation of de-escalation areas and the reduction of hostilities should generate concrete results for safe, unimpeded and sustained freedom of movement and humanitarian access by the United Nations and its partners. Cross-border humanitarian assistance remains critical and must be facilitated and protected, as it continues to represent a lifeline for 2.8 million people in the northern and southern parts of the Syrian Arab Republic.

43. Notwithstanding the positive steps in reducing violence in some areas of the country, I remain concerned about the reported harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure as a part of anti-ISIL operations, especially in Raqqah, Dayr al-Zawr and Hama Governorates. Civilians must be spared and protected. I reiterate my call that all those conducting military operations in the Syrian Arab Republic must do so in compliance with international humanitarian law. Military progress must not come at the cost of disproportionate civilian causalities and the destruction of infrastructure. The obligation to spare civilians and civilian objects remains for those fighting ISIL. Responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law must be respected, even when the enemy does not respect the rules and may be committing serious violations. The protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure is also critical to ensuring a sustainable path to recovery after the fighting is over and when it is time to rebuild.

44. I reiterate my call that the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all Member States, all parties to the conflict, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

45. Humanitarian assistance must be adequately funded. Funding for the Syrian humanitarian crisis stands at 42 per cent, far below where we need to be. Funding for the humanitarian response plan for the Syrian Arab Republic is at only 36 per cent, or $1.2 billion of the $3.4 billion requested. Recognizing the years of generosity and the significant contributions already made, I call upon Member States to continue to support the Syrian Arab Republic and the region's significant needs, and upon those that have pledged to ensure that they commit funds as soon as possible.

46. At the General Assembly, we have an important opportunity to review the recent evolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and re-assess our approach to the humanitarian disaster that has been caused by seven years of war. Recognizing that ultimately, the political process is the only course that can offer a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict and end the suffering of the people, my Special Envoy for Syria is also preparing to convene the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks in October. I am encouraged that the opposition High Negotiations Committee as well as the Cairo and Moscow opposition platforms continued substantive discussions in Riyadh on 21 and 22 August to foster a greater unity of purpose. I also expect the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to begin to engage substantially in negotiations on the political future of the country.

47. I reiterate my call on the international community to support a conducive environment for United Nations-facilitated negotiations by strengthening arrangements for ceasefires and de-escalation areas and by taking all measures that enhance humanitarian access to all in need, and that ensure the protection of all civilians throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. The people of the Syrian Arab Republic have suffered enough and deserve our full attention, genuine effort, vision and leadership to end what has become one of the worst humanitarian tragedies of our times.

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in August 2017

Rif Dimashq and Damascus Governorates

- On 1 August, a series of ground-based strikes hit residential buildings and a market in opposition-controlled Ayn Tarma, reportedly resulting in the death of a civilian, two women and a boy, in addition to causing numerous injuries, including to a civilian, who died on 2 August.
- On 2 August, a civilian was allegedly killed and at least four other civilians injured in ground-based strikes on residential areas in opposition-held Kafr Batna.
- On 2 August, air strikes hit residential areas in Ayn Tarma, reportedly killing two civilians, a man and a woman, and injuring numerous other civilians.
- On 3 August, a ground-based strike hit a residential area in Ayn Tarma, allegedly killing a female civilian and a girl, both of them displaced from Jobar.
- On 4 August, a civilian displaced from Obada was reportedly killed in air strikes on Ayn Tarma.
- On 5 August, numerous ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Ayn Tarma, allegedly resulting in the death of a male civilian and a girl and injury of more than 20 other civilians, including at least five children and six women.
- On 7 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Mudayra, reportedly resulting in the death of a girl and injury of at least two other civilians, including a woman.
- On 9 August, clashes between the armed opposition groups, Rahman Corps and Army of Islam, in the areas of Saqba and Hamuriyah, allegedly resulted in the death of a civilian.
- On 9 August, a series of ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Kafr Batna, reportedly killing one civilian. Ground-based strikes hit another residential area in Kafr Batna, allegedly killing three civilians and injuring several others as well as triggering a fire.
- On 10 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Hamuriyah, allegedly killing two civilians, including a child, in addition to wounding at least seven other civilians, including a woman.
- On 17 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Duma, reportedly resulting in the death of a male civilian and injury to an unknown number of civilians.
- On 19 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Hamuriyah, allegedly causing the partial destruction of a building, which killed a male civilian, his wife and their child and injured at least seven other civilians, including women and children.
- On 19 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Zamalka, reportedly killing two civilians, including a woman.

- On 28 August, ground-based strikes hit residential buildings and a market in Ayn Tarma, allegedly killing a 5-year-old boy and two girls in addition to wounding several other civilians.
- On 29 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Ayn Tarma, reportedly killing two civilians and injuring at least two others.

Dar'a and Suwayda' Governorates

- On 2 August, a civilian accused of theft was reportedly murdered in the town of Tafas, in Dar'a Governorate, by Free Syrian Army-affiliated Southern Front fighters.
- On 14 August, armed clashes broke out in the vicinity of Tha'lah, in Suwayda' Governorate, during which a civilian was allegedly killed in the crossfire.
- On 21 August, an improvised explosive device exploded on the road between Karak and Rakham, in eastern Dar'a Governorate, reportedly killing three civilians, including a journalist, his brother and the brother's son.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 15 August, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in the Akramiyah and A'zamiyah neighbourhoods in Aleppo city, allegedly killing four civilians, including a girl, and injuring at least nine others.
- On 6 August, two female civilians and a child were reportedly killed when ground-based strikes hit close to their home in the town of Ma'[illegible], in northern Aleppo Governorate.

Idlib Governorate

- On 12 August, unidentified gunmen allegedly entered the White Helmets' centre in Sarmin, reportedly killing seven male volunteers who had been on call that night. They appeared to have been shot in the head, and one appeared to have been severely beaten.
- On 22 August, a 3-year-old boy was reportedly shot and killed while he and his family were attempting to cross from Jisr al-Shughur into Turkey.
- On 22 August, Levant Liberation Organization members executed two male civilians who had been accused of killing a man in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man and stealing his vehicle in July. A video showing the two civilians being shot in the head in a public square in Kafr Nubl was circulated.

Hama Governorate

- On 16 August, two civilians, a woman and her husband, were allegedly killed when an air strike hit their vehicle in Wadi Hissayaharea while they were attempting to leave Uqayribat. Other family members were reportedly injured during the incident.
- On 19 August, air strikes hit a shopping area in Fakhr village, located eight kilometres east of Uqayribat, reportedly killing four children.
- On 22 August, air strikes hit a group of displaced persons in Ruwayd, village, in Uqayribat subdistrict, reportedly killing 12 civilians, including women and children, and injuring at least 20 others.

- On 31 August, ground-based strikes hit residential areas of the eastern part of Government-controlled Salamiyah, reportedly killing a 12-year-old child and damaging a few houses.

Homs Governorate

- On 10 August, air strikes hit residential areas in opposition-controlled Talbisah, reportedly killing a 12-year-old boy.
- On 12 August, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the village of opposition-controlled eastern Farhanyah, allegedly killing one male civilian and injuring three others, including one child, who lost a leg.
- On 19 August, air strikes hit residential areas in Kafr Laha city, allegedly injuring a boy, who died of his injuries on 22 August.
- On 20 August, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in Talbisah, reportedly killing two male civilians, including a nurse working at a Talbisah field hospital.
- On 21 August, air strikes hit residential areas in opposition-controlled Hulah, allegedly killing a male civilian and injuring a number of others.
- Early on the morning of 22 August, air strikes repeatedly hit residential areas in opposition-controlled Taldu, reportedly injuring tens of civilians from three families, including seven women, two girls and three boys.
- On 24 August, air strikes hit residential areas of Hulah, allegedly killing four civilians, including an elderly man and a boy.
- On 26 August, heavy ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the town of Ghantu, reportedly killing a boy and causing severe damage to several houses.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 2 August, residential areas in the Government-controlled Jurah neighbourhood of Dayr al-Zawr city were hit with ground-based strikes that reportedly killed at least one civilian.
- On 2 August, air strikes hit a residential area in Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-controlled town of Tibni, in the eastern part of the Governorate, allegedly killing at least 11 civilians from two families, including two women and three children, and injuring no fewer than 13 other civilians.
- On 3 August, ISIL launched a campaign to forcibly conscript civilians between 20 and 30 years of age in the areas of Albu Kamal and Mayadin, in eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr, with the stated aim of combating any anti-ISIL fighters in the Governorate.
- On 5 August, at least five civilians, including three children, were reportedly killed and seven other civilians were injured in the Jurah neighbourhood as a result of ground-based strikes. The coalition led by the United States of America publicly reported that it had conducted a strike near Raqqah on the same day.
- On 8 August, air strikes hit residential areas of Mayadin city, allegedly killing two children and injuring eight other civilians, including at least two women.
- At noon on 11 August, ISIL allegedly executed, by means of gunshots to the head, two men in the town of Qubar. The men were reportedly accused of smuggling civilians out of Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

- On 21 August, air strikes hit residential areas in Mayadin city, allegedly killing five civilians, including one woman and three children.
- On 15 August, air strikes hit residential areas of Masrab village, reportedly killing two civilians and injuring eight others.
- On 23 August, air strikes hit a residential area in Mayadin city, reportedly killing six civilians from one family, including two women and two children, and injuring at least six other civilians.

Raqqah Governorate

- On the morning of 1 August, air strikes hit residential areas in the ISIL-held Albo Saraya neighbourhood of Raqqah city, reportedly killing at least 27 civilians, including eight women and 12 children, and injured at least 28 other civilians. The United States-led coalition publicly reported that it had conducted 24 strikes near Raqqah on the same day.
- On 3 August, air strikes hit residential areas in the ISIL-controlled village of Ma'dan, allegedly killing eight civilians and injuring 14 others.
- On 4 August, air strikes hit a residential building in the centre of ISIL-controlled Raqqah city, reportedly killing at least 16 civilians, including three women and six children. The United States-led coalition publicly reported that on the same day it had conducted 11 strikes near Raqqah.
- On the morning of 8 August, air strikes hit a residential area in the ISIL-controlled Al-Thaqna neighbourhood in Raqqah city, allegedly killing at least 22 civilians, including nine women and 11 children. The United States-led coalition publicly reported that it had carried out 29 strikes near Raqqah on 8 August.
- On 15 August, air strikes hit residential areas of Raqqah city, allegedly killing nine civilians, including one woman and four children. In its public reporting, the United States-led coalition stated that it had carried out 48 strikes near Raqqah on the same day.
- On 16 August, air strikes hit residential areas in ISIL-controlled Badu neighbourhood and in the vicinity of Nur Mosque, reportedly killing 14 civilians, including two women and six children, and injuring at least 34 other civilians. The United States-led coalition issued several public reports indicating that it had conducted 48 strikes near Raqqah the same day.
- On the evening of 17 August, air strikes hit residential areas of the ISIL-controlled Madrasat Mu'awiya neighbourhood of Raqqah city, allegedly killing at least 22 civilians, including six women and at least nine children. The United States-led coalition issued several public reports indicating that it had conducted 40 strikes near Raqqah the same day.
- On the afternoon of 20 August, air strikes hit a three-storey residential building in Badu neighbourhood, reportedly killing at least 27 civilians, including seven children, three of them girls, and injuring no fewer than seven others. The United States-led coalition publicly reported that it had conducted 54 strikes near Raqqah the same day.
- On the afternoon of 21 August, air strikes again hit residential areas in Badu neighbourhood of Raqqah city, allegedly killing at least 21 civilians, including six women and four children, and injuring no fewer than 11 other civilians. The same afternoon, air strikes hit a residential area in the ISIL-held Skhani neighbourhood, reportedly killing 32 civilians, at least 11 of them women and

six of them children. The casualties included at least three entire families. The United States-led coalition issued several public reports indicating that it had carried out 48 strikes near Raqqah on that day.

Hasakah Governorate

- On 11 August, a husband, wife and their daughter were allegedly killed by unexploded ordnance in the area of the Rajm al-Salibi site in southern Hasakah Governorate.
- On 19 August, air strikes hit in the vicinity of a mosque in ISIL-held Jaz'ah village, in the Shaddadah area of southern Hasakah Governorate, allegedly killing at least 17 civilians, including five children. The United States-led coalition publicly reported that it had conducted a strike near Shaddadah on the same day.